

Minutes of the
Edina Park Board
October 13, 2009
Edina City Hall, Council Chambers

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jennifer Kenney, Todd Fronek, Dan Peterson, Jeff Sorem, Bill Lough, Rob Presthus, Randy Meyer, Joseph Hulbert, Keeya Steel

MEMBERS ABSENT: Ben Pobuda

STAFF PRESENT: John Keprios, Ed MacHolda, Janet Canton, Susie Miller, Donna Tilsner, Larry Thayer, Susan Weigle, Todd Anderson, Tom Shirley

I. APPROVAL OF THE SEPTEMBER 8, 2009 PARK BOARD MINUTES

Dan Peterson MOVED TO APPROVE THE SEPTEMBER 8, 2009 PARK BOARD MINUTES. Bill Lough SECONDED THE MOTION. MINUTES APPROVED.

II. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Krieg Grant Proposal – Jeannie Hanson, Edina Energy & Environment Commission - Science Education Project Proposal - Mr. Fronek informed the Park Board that Jeannie Hanson from the Edina Energy and Environment Commission was unable to attend tonight's meeting and that Mr. Keprios didn't feel he had enough information to keep the item on the agenda. Mr. Fronek asked Mr. Keprios if he could give a quick background just for the record on what it is they are trying to do. Mr. Keprios replied that in all fairness to the Energy and Environment Commission this is really a proposal from them and therefore he does not have anything to add other than what is in his staff report.
- B. 2010 Fees and Charges – Mr. Keprios informed the Park Board that, as he mentioned in his staff report, they didn't have as many increases as they typically do. He noted that regarding Arneson Acres they did bump up the fee in order to keep pace with what the expenses have been doing as well as try to keep pace with the wear and tear on the facility. Mr. Keprios explained that they have had an increasing number of non-residents renting the facility (non-residents have been allowed to reserve the facility for their exclusive use). He pointed out that for the first time they would like to have a "non-resident fee" category for the rentals at Arneson Acres in order to try and be consistent with some of the other non-resident fees. He noted that he still thinks it's a good bargain it's just slightly higher than the resident fee. Mr. Keprios commented that another thing that could be considered is to eliminate non-residents from using the facility but that is not the intent from staff's perspective. He stated that there is enough desire for it and often times the non-residents will reserve the facility to which there are quite a few residents that attend their functions.

Mr. Fronek asked in regards to Arneson Acres if he knows that the Edina Football Association and some of the other associations use the facility and asked if they have to pay for their use. Mr. Keprios replied that if it's part of their normal business then

the participant fee they are paying will cover the expenses. However, if it's for a team party or something like that then there is an additional charge. He added that there is no written policy regarding this, it has just always been past practice.

Mr. Fronek indicated that regarding the user fees per participant he knows that one of the ideas discussed last month was to possibly increase the outdoor hockey rink user fee and/or the other user fees and asked Mr. Keprios to comment on that. Mr. Keprios responded there are three different athletic association user fees; fields, gymnasiums and outdoor hockey rinks. He indicated that they try to keep them the same, regardless if one facility costs a little more to maintain, they just try to remain consistent. Mr. Keprios explained the reason staff is not proposing an increase for that particular fee is due to budget cuts. He pointed out that they are going to be reducing their number of part-time staff by four so the argument can be made that they are going to get slightly less service and therefore found it difficult to charge more for less. However, having said that he did slightly increase the dollar an hour use for the rental of general park areas and for the fields which are basically individual rentals so their expenses stayed the same and he believes they will still be able to provide the same quality of service for that. He added that he thinks arguably in the long run they are going to notice a slight reduction in service due to the lesser number of part-time staff.

Mr. Meyer asked how the \$9.00 per participant user fee was originally arrived at because it seems very reasonable especially for sports like soccer that play quite a number of days and there is lots of wear and tear on the turf. Mr. Keprios explained that the fee wasn't intended to ever capture all of the expenses incurred. He indicated that when the first fee came about years ago it was around \$4.00/participant and has slowly gone up through the years. He commented that they are probably one of the first communities to initiate a per participant fee for the use of outdoor athletic facilities and added that most communities don't charge anything. He noted that the fee doesn't cover all of the facility maintenance expenses for all of the sports but it covers a large portion of it.

Mr. Peterson asked Mr. Keprios what's the philosophy on the resident vs. non-resident pay differential because it seems to be about a 20% difference. In addition, is that what most other cities charge for non-resident use of their facilities. Mr. Keprios replied that percentage wise it's all over the board and he doesn't know if that's necessarily consistent with what other communities do. He explained that the way this is priced it's intended to discourage excessive non-resident use. However, it's also priced at a level that will more than capture the expenses and that's the philosophy behind it.

Mr. Peterson indicated that it doesn't seem to be a big problem for competition between residents and non-residents to get the date they want. He asked if there would be any reason to give residents a leg up and give them a 30 day advantage to sign up over a non-resident. Mr. Keprios replied there really hasn't been a problem to date so they haven't had to initiate any further policy. However the minute residents are unable to get into the spot they want due to a non-resident staff will come forward and recommend a change in policy.

Mr. Meyer asked Mr. MacHolda if they are still planning to do the addition to the Edina Aquatic Center next summer and, if so, will the pool be shut down for any amount of time. Mr. MacHolda replied that currently there are too many unknowns regarding the CIP to know when it will take place. He also noted that it will not be necessary to shut down the pool because construction can take place during the fall/winter season.

Mr. Sorem asked what is the justification or reason for increasing the Braemar Golf Course resident patron card \$5.00. Assistant Manager Todd Anderson replied that basically for the life of the patron card it equates to a \$1.00 a year increase because they only do it once every five years. He noted that last year was the first year for the non-resident patron card at the \$110.00 rate and they did find it was a success. He added that they sold 258 cards but they also found that when some people did the math a number of them realized they weren't going to come out ahead because they weren't going to get in enough rounds.

Todd Fronek ENTERTAINED A MOTION TO APPROVE THE FEES AND CHARGES AS PROPOSED BY STAFF. Jeff Sorem SECONDED MOTION. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

- C. Community Education Services Board Representative – Mr. Fronek stated that this is a good chance to thank Ray O'Connell for all of his years of service to the Park Board. He noted that since Mr. O'Connell is no longer a Park Board member they need a new Community Education Services Board representatives and asked for a volunteer.

Mr. Lough asked what specific agencies or commissions do the Community Education Services cover. Mr. Meyer responded that the Community Education Services Board primarily focuses on the Edina Community Education to which Doug Johnson is the Director. He indicated that it's all of the services that they provide primarily around Community Education. He noted that there are some school board reps as well as a number of reps from the different groups they are involved with such as early childhood education, community education and then there are a few activities that are also tied into that community services type of thing.

III. OLD BUSINESS

Closing Strachauer Park and Countryside Park Skating Rinks – Mr. Keprios informed the Park Board that he did talk to the President of the Edina Hockey Association about possibly coming forward with \$3,700.00 in order to keep the rink at Strachauer Park open or would they be interested in raising the rink participation fee to cover the expense. He indicated that the EHA only reserved Strachauer Park for a total of four hours last season because it's not a rink that's really desired like some of the other rinks. Mr. Keprios pointed out that it is well known that this is not a heavily scheduled rink which is why it gets the amount of use that it does by both residents and non-residents. Mr. Keprios stated that the EHA has declined the offer to raise the fee to cover the expenses. He stated the EHA also commented in the interest of

finding ways to reduce some of the budget shortfall next year that closing Strachauer Park would be a good idea and they would support it.

Mr. Keprios stated that the proposal is back on the table for Park Board's consideration to recommend on to the City Council to close Countryside Park and Strachauer Park outdoor skating rinks at least for the coming year. Mr. Meyer stated that the motion as it exists also includes that all rinks will close February 15th and asked if that is still correct to which Mr. Keprios replied yes.

Mr. Meyer asked if different organizations would like to pay to have the rinks open or prepped for the weekends could that be an option. Mr. Keprios replied he would be very open to entertain the idea of groups coming forward if they were to pay what the cost is to keep one or more rinks open. The mission is to cut costs because they just don't have it in the budget.

Mr. Fronek asked Mr. Keprios what type of notice he thinks they may or may not need to give the neighbors, what's the process. Mr. Keprios replied that once the Park Board makes a recommendation to the City Council at that point it becomes their decision and process.

Mr. Meyer asked if this passed tonight are they going to get a bunch of outcry from the community and then they will be forced to go backwards. He also asked if they would be better off waiting another month to let the word spread and then decide do we proceed or is someone else going to step up with alternate funding. Mr. Keprios replied that after tonight this issue goes to the City Council so he believes it is best to not delay the decision.

Mr. Keprios noted that Park Board is welcome to attend a work session next Tuesday at 5:00 pm to discuss the 2010 budget process. He added that the City Council is going to be interested in the recommendation you ultimately make. He stated once the Park Board makes a recommendation regardless of what it is it will likely not come back to the Park Board for further consideration, it will be in the City Council's hands.

Ms. Steel stated that she agrees the City Council would be a good place for residents to voice their concerns and asked how are the residents going to know what's on the agenda revolving around the budget proposal. Mr. Keprios explained that he has already put together a memo of a variety of budget reductions that totals almost \$200,000 that has been given to the City Manager. The City Manager then chooses what he feels is best to recommend to the City Council. He noted he was directed by the City Manager to bring this controversial item of closing two rinks, to the Park Board which will be the extent of the Park Board's involvement as requested. Mr. Keprios pointed out as far as the budget process; it will all take place in a transparent public forum.

Mr. Hulbert asked if there were any other items that may have been on the final list that didn't come to the Park Board. Mr. Keprios responded that he made a number of recommendations to the City Manager of which he was not directed to bring to the

Park Board. He commented that some of the suggestions that were not accepted dealt with professional services, continuing education and conference cuts, removing the plastic bags from the dog waste stations, etc,. He noted that the City Manager did accept eliminating four part-time positions for the summer. He added that his recommendation to significantly reduce the paths and hard surface maintenance budget was not accepted.

Mr. Hulbert stated that it seems to him like a worse case scenario would be to close a neighborhood rink. He commented that he thinks there would be a lot of disappointed kids if it's not open. Mr. Keprios pointed out that the City of Edina would not be alone in this approach to a budget savings measure. The City of Burnsville is going to stop flooding thirteen of their rinks and there are other communities shutting down rinks as well. He commented that this is the last thing they want to have to do (cut services); however, budget cuts do need to be made somewhere.

Mr. Sorem stated that he thinks it's important to note that the EHA is just one user of these outdoor facilities. He commented that he and his family use them quite heavily in the winter. He added that during the last few years the amount of general skaters, not just hockey players, has been phenomenal. He noted that he would be okay with closing the rink at Countryside Park because there are not that many residents around there and there currently is no hockey rink. However, with Strachauer he's a little more reluctant especially because the next closest park would be Pamela Park which you have to walk across France to get there. Also because of the increasing number of skaters he would hate to lose the rink at Strachauer.

Mr. Keprios indicated that as he looked at a variety of things to recommend cutting, this happens to be one of those activities that doesn't eliminate the opportunity to skate somewhere else in the park system.

Mr. Meyer asked if they have ever looked at charging a fee or having an annual pass or some way of offsetting these costs. Mr. Keprios replied that he thinks if we administered a fee for the outdoor rinks he feels it would be a real negative for residents and non-residents who have traditionally been allowed to use the outdoor rinks for free, similar to many other public recreational facilities such as tennis courts, playground equipment, walking paths, etc.

Mr. Peterson asked what the alternative is to saving \$3,750.00 if you keep one rink open and close one. Mr. Keprios replied there are a couple of things he would recommend: one would be to eliminate the plastic bags for picking up dog droppings and another option would be to defer some maintenance to the paths and hard surface budget.

Ms. Steel indicated that she is hesitant to close the rink at Strachauer Park but would be okay with closing the rink at Countryside Park.

Mr. Lough stated that he has a comment regardless of how the vote goes but asked if it would be possible to get more lead time for the 2010-2011 year if the city is still in

budget constraints and they would have to consider cuts. He noted that this way they would not be forced at the last minute with concerns that many of the Park Board members have legitimately raised.

Mr. Sorem indicated that since the usage is down at Countryside Park and they don't have a hockey rink it makes sense to close it. Therefore he would be in favor of splitting the difference and keeping the rink at Strachauer Park open.

Ms. Kenney noted that she also is leaning towards splitting the difference close the rink at Countryside Park and keep the rink at Strachauer Park open. Mr. Hulbert agrees that this would be a good compromise as well. Mr. Presthus indicated that it makes sense to him to close the rink at Countryside Park for the season and close the rest of the rinks on February 15th. Mr. Fronek indicated that he does like the ideas of keeping Strachauer open and closing Countryside.

Jeff Sorem MOVED TO CLOSE THE RINK AT COUNTRYSIDE PARK AND KEEP THE RINKS AT STRACHAUER PARK OPEN; PLUS ALL OUTDOOR SKATING RINKS WILL CLOSE FOR THE SEASON AT THE END OF THE DAY OF FEBRUARY 15, 2010 (This does not include Centennial Lakes Park). Rob Presthus SECONDED THE MOTION. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

IV. UPDATES FROM STAFF –

- A. Pamela Park Master Plan - Mr. Keprios thanked the Park Board for all the time and effort they've put into the Pamela Park master plan. He indicated that City Council did take the Park Board's recommendation and approved it 100%. He noted that it is now his goal to put the drawing behind Plexiglas or something and put it up at the park so that people can see the master plan and see what will be happening in the distant and not so distant future. He indicated he intends to do the same at Countryside Park and added that it was a great process and had a great outcome.
- B. York Park - Mr. MacHolda informed the Park Board that Edina residents, Jim and Zibby Nunn, Mr. Keprios and the Edina Community Foundation are working closely together to improve the ball field at York Park. He noted that the Nunns lost their middle child this summer and the contributions they received are going to convert the sand lot ball field at York Park into a very nice little league baseball field which he thinks the entire community will enjoy. The project should be complete for a dedication in the spring of 2010.

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 7:50 PM.